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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6336
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 4730
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2145
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 2459
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 8560
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 9712
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 6229
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 2148
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 0719
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 002138

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/04/2018

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SUBJECT: JAPANESE PRIME MINISTER FUKUDA SEES A "MORE
COOPERATIVE" RUSSIA "MOVING TOWARDS MORE DEMOCRACY."

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer. Reason: 1.4 (b) and (d)

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¶1. (C) In a meeting with the U.S. and Japanese astronauts from NASA's recent Space Station 124 mission, Prime Minister Fukuda, after exchanging pleasantries, brought up Russia. The Prime Minister asked the astronauts about their experience working with Russia, which they replied was very good, noting the Russian Space Station Commander during their mission had been a friend. Fukuda observed that he had noted a change in Russia's position at the G-8. In Fukuda's view, the Russians were more cooperative and "listened to Bush." He said that the Russians were often "not rational" and "stubborn about their policies," but added it seems their motivation has changed and that Russia seems to be "moving towards more democracy."

¶2. (C) Comment. We report Prime Minister Fukuda's off-the-cuff comments on Russia for what they're worth. There does not appear to be any warming trends in relations at the moment and the impasse on the Northern Territories shows little sign of resolution. Nonetheless, Fukuda's meeting with Medvedev at the G-8 seems to have left him upbeat rather than pessimistic on Russia.

SCHIEFFER